

REQUEST for placement on April 19, 2016 agenda of Buncombe County Commissioners Meeting

Purpose of Presentation:

Explanation of the need for a public bus route from the current nearest bus stop at River Ridge Shopping Center down HWY 74A to the Reynolds School campus: a distance of 1.9 miles **in order to improve graduation rates in the Reynolds School District**. Our 10 minute presentation will include a piktochart.

Presenters:

Representatives of the Family to Family (F2F) program in the Reynolds school district:

- Cindy Oak, Tina Stovall, and Tammy Young, Leslie Anderson (in absentia due to surgery).

F2F is a volunteer program begun in 2009 to support impoverished youth and families in the Reynolds district by connecting families of faith to cover identified student needs that cannot be met by existing agencies. At the request of school officials at Reynolds Middle and High Schools, F2F undertook a study of transportation needs of students and the impact on school engagement and success.

- Ten Reynolds High School students who personally experience the loss of opportunities due to lack of public transportation from their homes to their middle and high schools

Impact statement:

-Lack of transportation is a barrier that impacts the graduation rates of a community. This is one of few barriers that can be addressed directly and solved in order to level the playing field for our impoverished students and families.

-Graduation Initiative studies show that impoverished students who do not have access to extracurricular school activities often do not complete high school successfully. Students who cannot access opportunities and requirements such as tutoring, recovery credit courses, dual enrollment classes, attendance make-up sessions as well as extracurricular activities such as sports practices and events, fine arts rehearsals and productions, and school social activities *due to no transportation, other than the regular school bus, do not engage in the life of their schools and feel they do not "belong"*.

-Furthermore, families who cannot access their children's schools due to lack of transportation also do not participate in their child's academic life by not attending teacher conferences, not participating in school events, not volunteering, nor even picking their child up from school when they are sick. Thus, they do not encourage school engagement which also has been shown to decrease rates of graduation.

Impoverished students and families become invisible.

Additional Findings Through this Project:

- Statistics show that 60% of Middle School and over 40% of High School students receive free and reduced lunch rates indicating a high number of families living in poverty within the Reynolds district. Because High School students are reluctant to report, the 40% underestimates the need.

- It is also significant to note that over 90% of the Reynolds Middle School families and over 60% of the High School families live within the city limits, pay city taxes, and utilize the city bus for many reasons.

- Our survey shows that 53% of our students/parents and 74% of our community residents would ride the public bus if available.

- In gathering anecdotal information, we learned that fewer high school students are obtaining their NC drivers' licenses due to economic restraints.

Timeline and methodology of research:

October 2013 - Initial meeting with Reynolds Middle and High School administrators/ counselors/ social workers who identified the top barrier impacting their impoverished students as the lack of public transportation to their campuses.

November 2013 - Initial meeting with Julie Mayfield, Chair, Asheville Multimodal Transportation Commission and Chris Pelly, Asheville City Council

October 2014 – Initial meeting with Dr. Tony Baldwin, superintendent of Buncombe County Schools, and administrators from Reynolds Middle and High Schools

November/December 2014 - Public Bus Transportation electronic and paper survey conducted with students and parents from the Middle and High Schools. Over 900 responses were received.

May 2015 – Received final student and parent survey report compiled by AP Statistics class, Reynolds High School

July 2015 – Follow-up meeting with Dr. Tony Baldwin, school administrators, and Buncombe County Graduation Initiative Coordinator, Kaye Lamb. Request to Ms. Lamb for research on the connection between lack of school participation and graduation rates.

August 2015 – Community residents (apartment complexes) and Businesses close to the Reynolds campus surveyed and anecdotal information gathered.

January 2016 -Meeting with Kaye Lamb, Graduation Initiative Coordinator, to hear her findings and share research and anecdotal information.

January 2016 - Meeting with Julie Mayfield, Asheville City Council, and Cindy McMahon, Buncombe County School Board member and Reynolds District resident

February 2016 - Meeting with Ann Franklin, Chair of Buncombe County School Board and Cindy McMahon, School Board representative

February 2016 - Meeting with Yuri Koslen, Transit Projects Coordinator, City of Asheville

April 2016 - Meeting with Ellen Frost, Buncombe County Commissioner

April 2016 – Meeting with David Gantt, Chair of County Commissioners

**The outcome of each meeting was encouragement to pursue our quest for a public bus down Hwy 74A in order to remove the transportation barrier for impoverished students and their families in our Reynolds district.*

OUR REQUEST: To present our findings with the purpose of asking the County Commissioners to work closely with the Buncombe County School Board and the Asheville City Council to provide a public bus route at least 5 days a week, 8 hours a day from River Ridge Shopping Center to the Reynolds campus, a distance of 1.9 miles.

Question 1 Analysis: Tell Us Who You Are

Answer	Count	Percentage
I Live On or Near Hwy 74A	382	20%
I Work On or Near Hwy 74A	59	3.1%
I am a Reynolds Middle School Student	402	21.1%
I am a Reynolds High School Student	848	44.5%
I am a Reynolds Middle School Parent	79	4.1%
I am a Reynolds High School Parent	105	5.5%
Other	32	1.7%

Of the people who took this survey the greatest number of responses comes from Reynolds High school students and those who live on or near Highway 74. The lowest number of respondents comes from the parents of both Reynolds Middle School and Reynolds High School, those who work on or near Highway 74, and those who marked in the “other” category. Reynolds Middle School students had a response of 21.1%.

What is your typical mode of transportation to get to and from school?

MODE OF TRANSPORTATION	PERCENTAGES
Walk	1.66%
Cycle	0.00%
School Bus	34.09%
Public Bus	0.75%
Carpool	20.51%
Friend(s)	8.30%
Drive Alone	24.28%
Taxi	0.75%
Other	9.20%
Not Applicable	0.45%

Question #2

The highest percentage (34.09%) of the people surveyed used a school bus as their typical mode of transportation to get to and from school. The second highest percentage (24.28%) drove alone. Only 0.75% of people took a taxi and 0.75% took a public bus to get to and from school. Of the people surveyed, only 1.66% of people walked to school.

Neighborhood	Percentage
Beverly Hills	2.81
Haw Creek	15.64
Kenilworth	2.37
Oakley	15.49
Oteen/Riceville	12.67
Reynolds	18.24
Shiloh	4.15
Other	28.61

Question #3

When asked which neighborhood the subjects reside in, the greatest portion (28.61%) of them answered a neighborhood that was not listed as an answer choice. The three areas that are least populous in the survey (Beverly Hills, Kenilworth, and Shiloh) should have less bus stops compared to more populated areas (Reynolds, Haw Creek, and Oakley). There should be a connecting bus that links Reynolds to Oakley, Oteen/Riceville, and Haw Creek. Fairview and Cane Creek were the most common responses in those that selected the “other” choice in the question, so there should be bus stops in those areas as well.

Have you ever wanted to participate in before/after school activities but could not due to lack of transportation?	Percentage
Yes	45.82
No	54.18

Question #4

The majority of people (54.18 percent) do not have any problems with transportation if they have an extracurricular activity after school, however there is large portion (45.82) that do have a problem with getting home after an extracurricular activity.

Question Five:

“If it were convenient for you to take a public bus for any activity listed in Question #4, would you?”

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	703	53.26%
No	617	46.74%

Question number five, “If it were convenient for you to take a public bus for any activity in Question #4, would you,” was most commonly responded with “yes.” A majority of people (53.26%) responded with “yes” to question number five. This indicates that the majority of individuals surveyed would take advantage of a bus service was provided. These results can be said to eschew the worry that even if the bus service was provided, the individuals surveyed would not take advantage of it.

Question Six:

“If you answered “yes” in Question #5, what time of day/evening would you most likely use a Hwy 74A public bus?”

	Frequency	Percentage
6:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	129	13.8%
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	92	9.9%
3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	489	52.5%
5:00 p.m. -9:00 p.m.	204	21.9%
Other	18	1.9%

Question number six, “If you answered “yes” in Question #5, what time of day/evening would you most likely use a Hwy 74A public buss,” was primarily answered with the response “3:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m. A majority of people (52.5%) answering the survey responded with this answer. During this period many students would be participating in various clubs and other extracurricular activities; many students that currently would not be able to participate in these activities possibly would with the implementation of a bus service- they have expressed this interest through the survey’s results. The second most popular answer was “5:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.” This response corresponds to a variety of sporting events, which often take place later in the afternoon or evening; the proposed bus service could help students who wish to participate travel to and from their sporting events.

Question 7 Analysis

Question 7: Single Public Bus Trips are \$1 Each Way and Monthly Bus Passes are \$20/month with UNLIMITED Use (Half price for Children Ages 6-19). Would You Pay This Amount for You or Your Child to Ride the Public Bus?

Question 7 Data

Response	Number Responded	Proportion
Yes	792	61.11%
No	504	38.89%

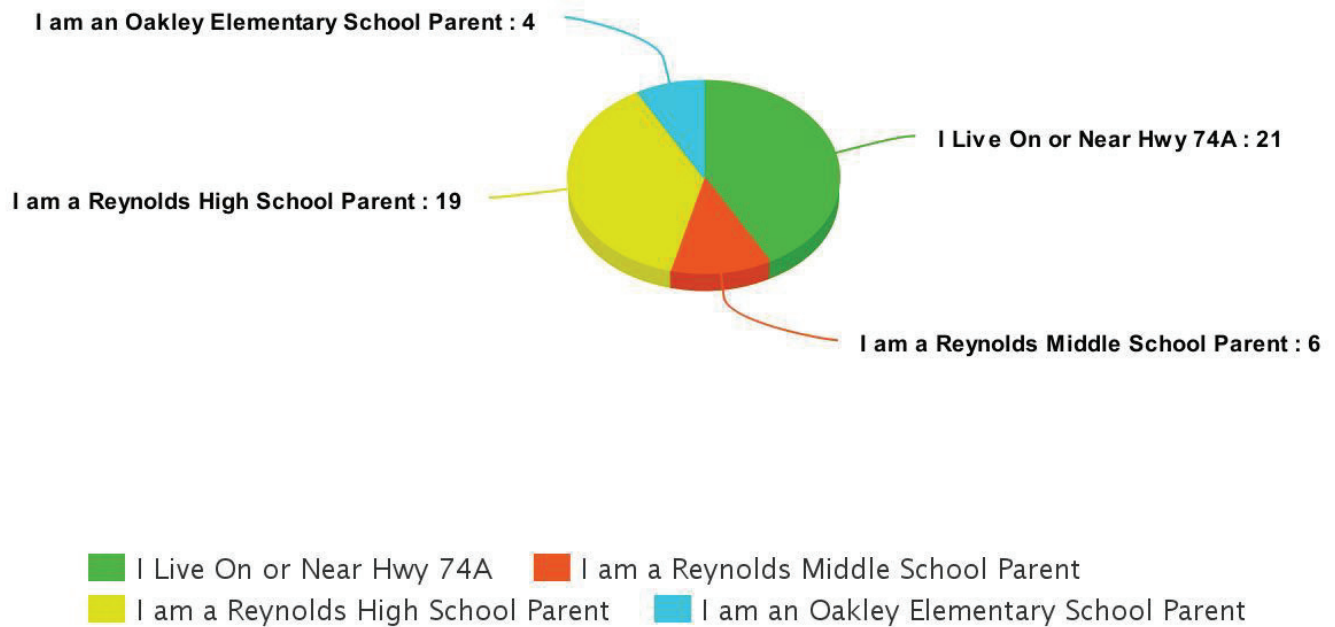
When asked “Single Public Bus Trips are \$1 Each Way and Monthly Bus Passes are \$20/month with UNLIMITED Use (Half price for Children Ages 6-19). Would You Pay This Amount for You or Your Child to Ride the Public Bus?” 792 participants answered Yes (61.11% answered yes), This means that the majority of people would pay the option of \$1 for single trips or pay \$20/month for unlimited use of the public bus system with half price for children ages 6-19. This majority shows more than half of the people in our sample believe that they would take advantage of the bus systems for one of those prices. For the response of no, 504 participants answered (38.89% answered no). This is a large number of our participants, however the majority still lies with the yes response and the majority of people are willing to take advantage of the bus system for a fee, for either themselves or their children.

Community Survey

Question 1: Tell Us Who You Are

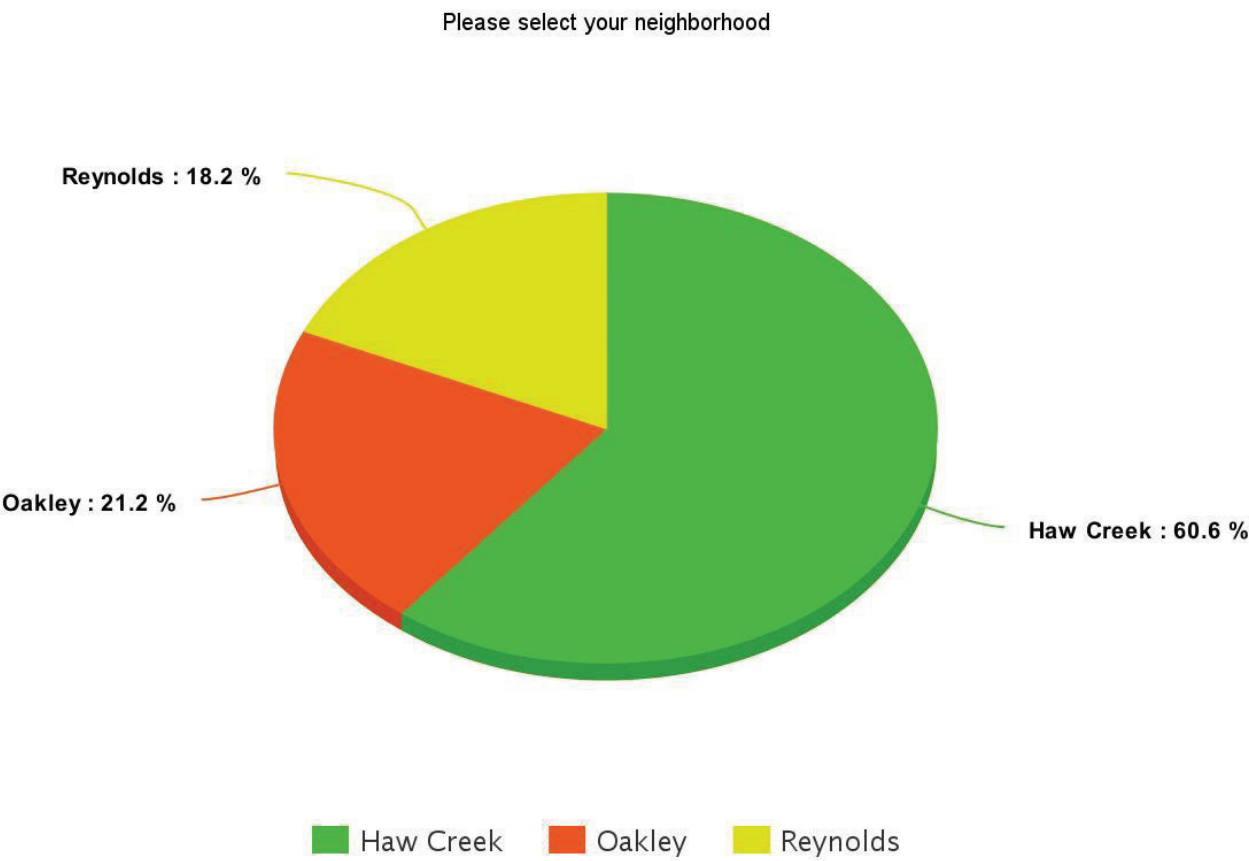
Answer	Count	Percentage
I Live On or Near Hwy 74A	21	42%
I am a Reynolds Middle School Parent	6	12%
I am a Reynolds High School Parent	19	38%
I am an Oakley Elementary School Parent	4	8%

Question 1: Tell Us Who You Are



Question 2: Please select your neighborhood

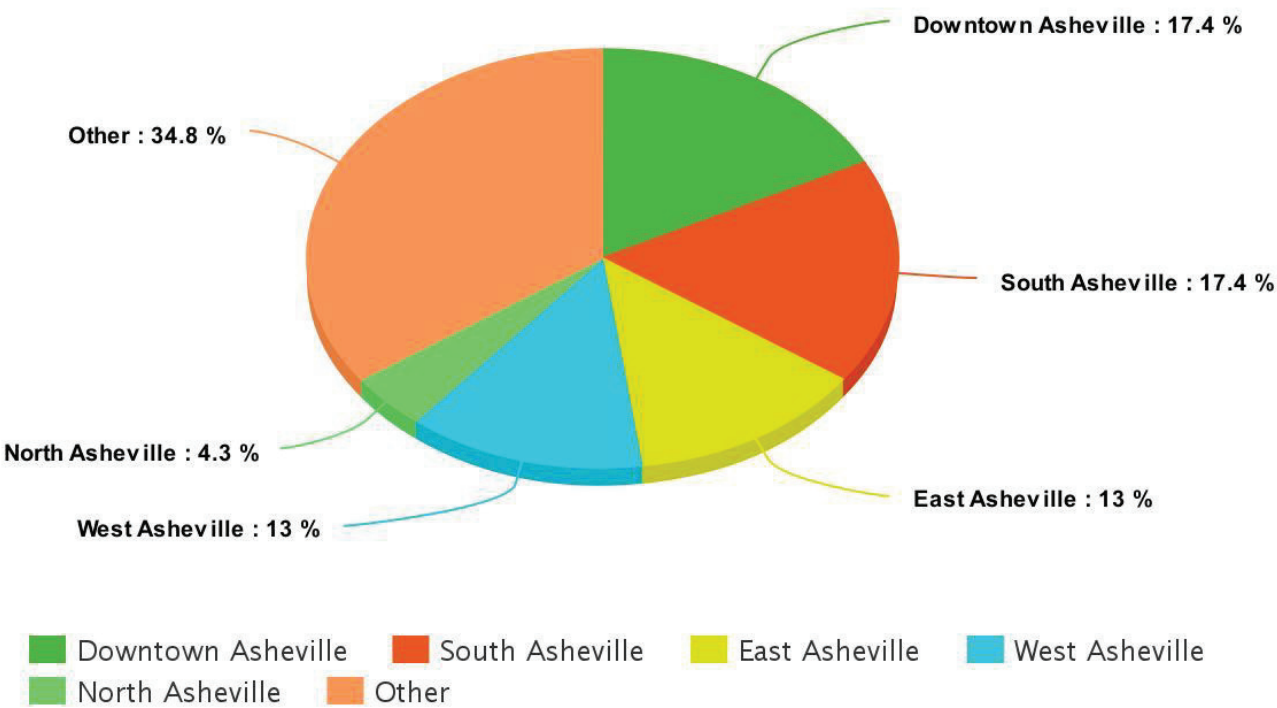
Neighborhood	Percentage
Haw Creek	60.6%
Oakley	21.2%
Reynolds	18.2%



Question 3: If you live on Hwy 74A or nearby Hwy 74A and work elsewhere, where do you work?

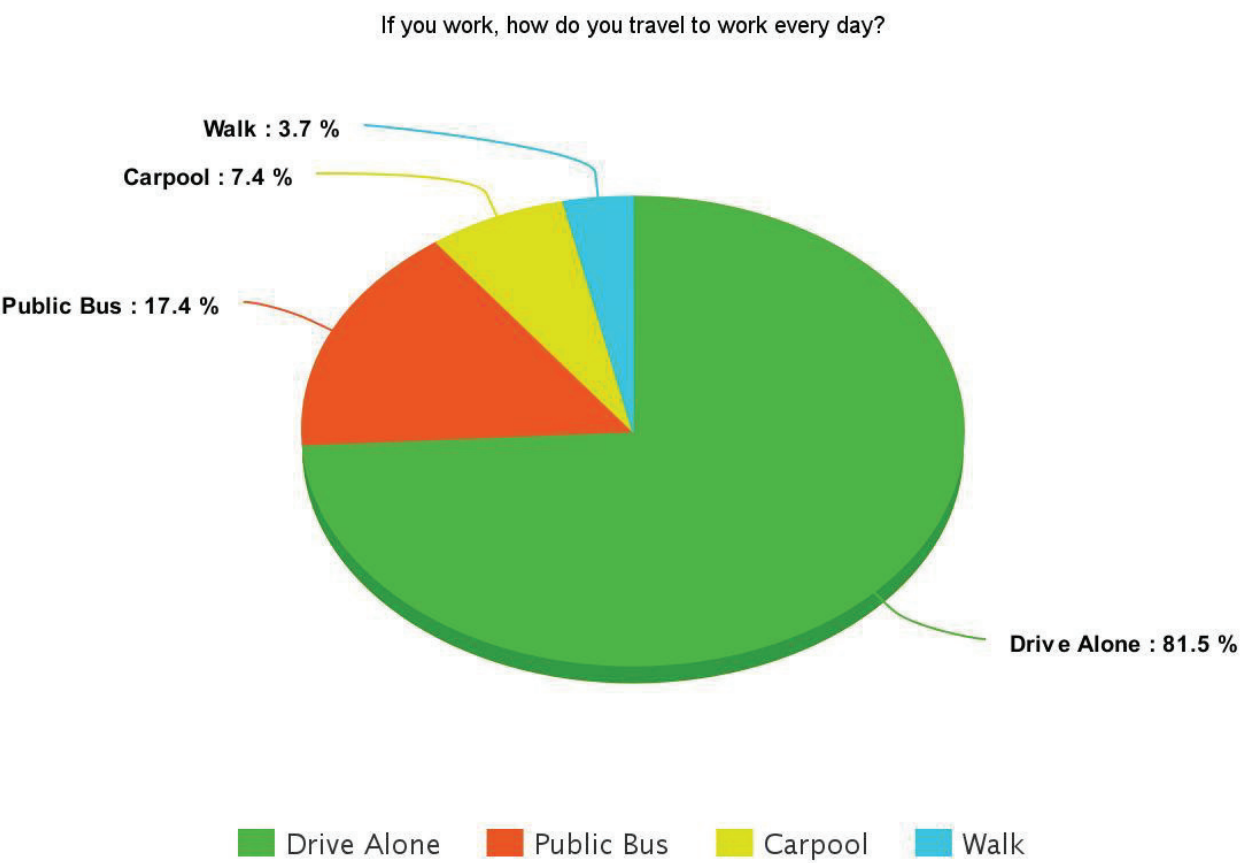
Location	Percentage
Downtown Asheville	17.4%
South Asheville	17.4%
East Asheville	13%
West Asheville	13%
North Asheville	4.3%
Other	34.8%

If you live on Hwy 74A or nearby Hwy 74A and work elsewhere, where do you work?



Question 4: If you work, how do you travel to work every day?

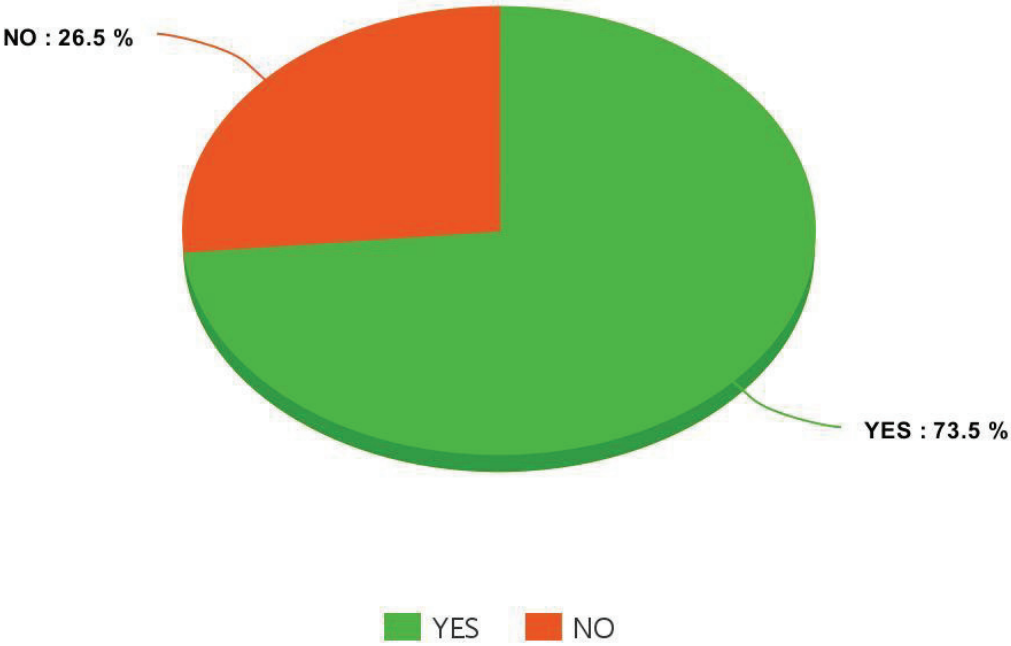
Mode of Transportation	Percentage
Drive Alone	81.5%
Public Bus	7.4%
Carpool	7.4%
Walk	3.7%



Question 5: If it were convenient for you to use a Hwy 74A public bus route for work, to Reynolds Middle or Reynolds High School, or for pleasure, would you?

Mode of Transportation	Percentage
Yes	73.5%
No	26.5%

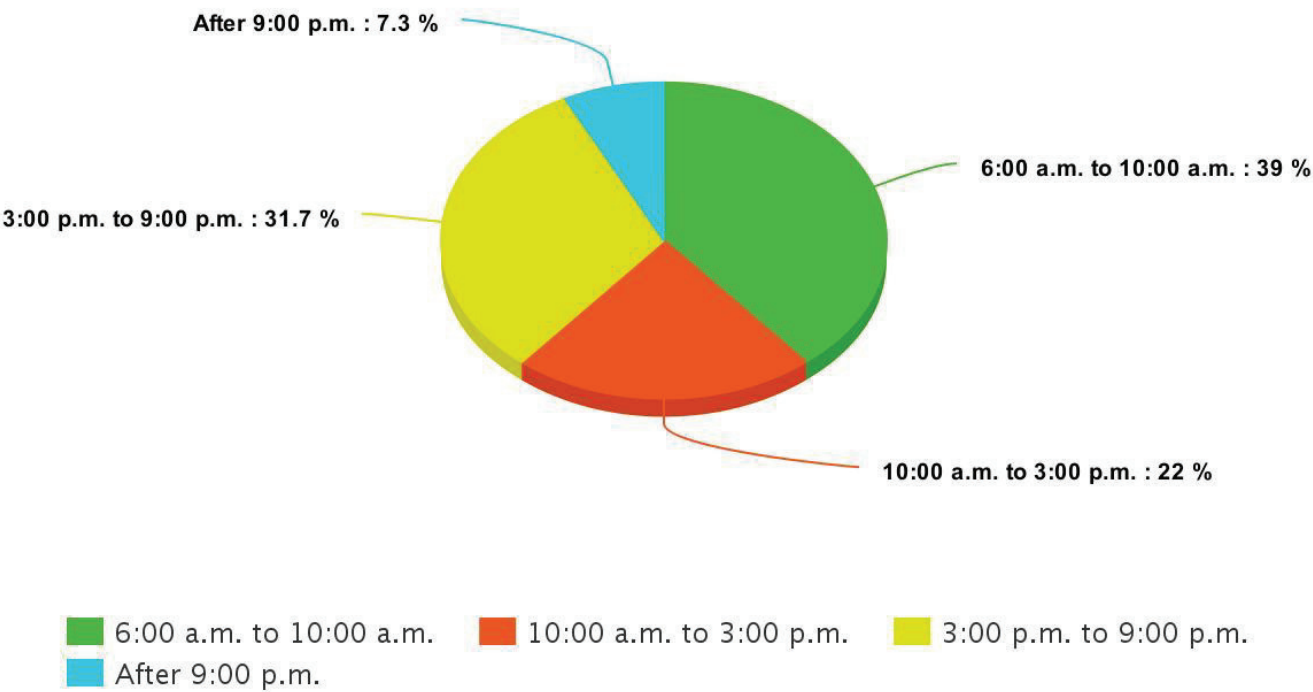
If it were convenient for you to use a Hwy 74A public bus route for work, to Reynolds Middle or Reynolds High School, or for pleasure, would you?



Question 6: What time of day would you most likely use a Hwy 74A public bus route?

Time Period	Percentage
6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	39.0%
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.	22.0%
3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.	31.7%
After 9:00 p.m.	7.3%

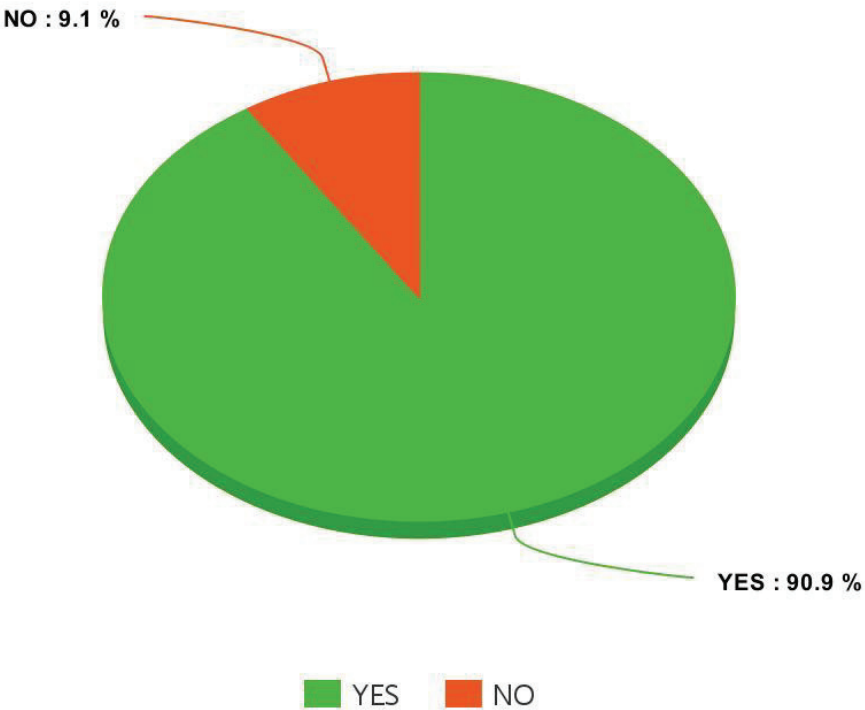
What time of day would you most likely use a Hwy 74A public bus route?



Question 7: Single public bus trips are \$1.00 each way, and monthly bus passes with UNLIMITED use are \$20/month. Would you pay this amount for you or your child to ride the public bus?

Response	Percentage
Yes	90.9%
No	9.1%

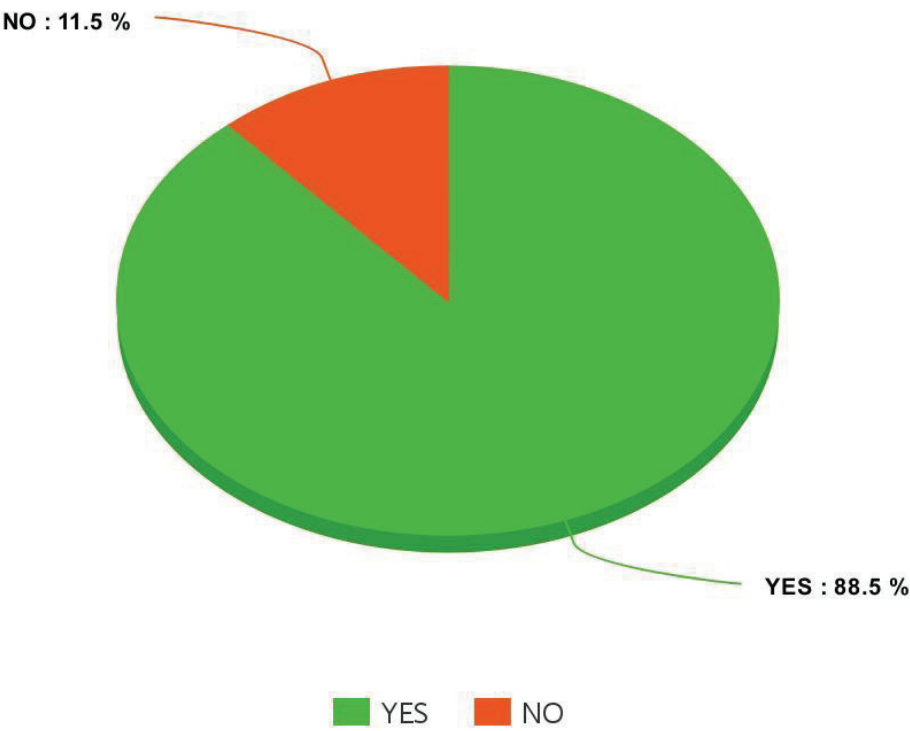
Single public bus trips are \$1.00 each way, and monthly bus passes with UNLIMITED use are \$20/month. Would you pay this amount for you or your child to ride the public bus?



Question 8: If your employer offered a public bus pass at no cost to you, would you consider riding the bus?

Response	Percentage
Yes	88.5%
No	11.5%

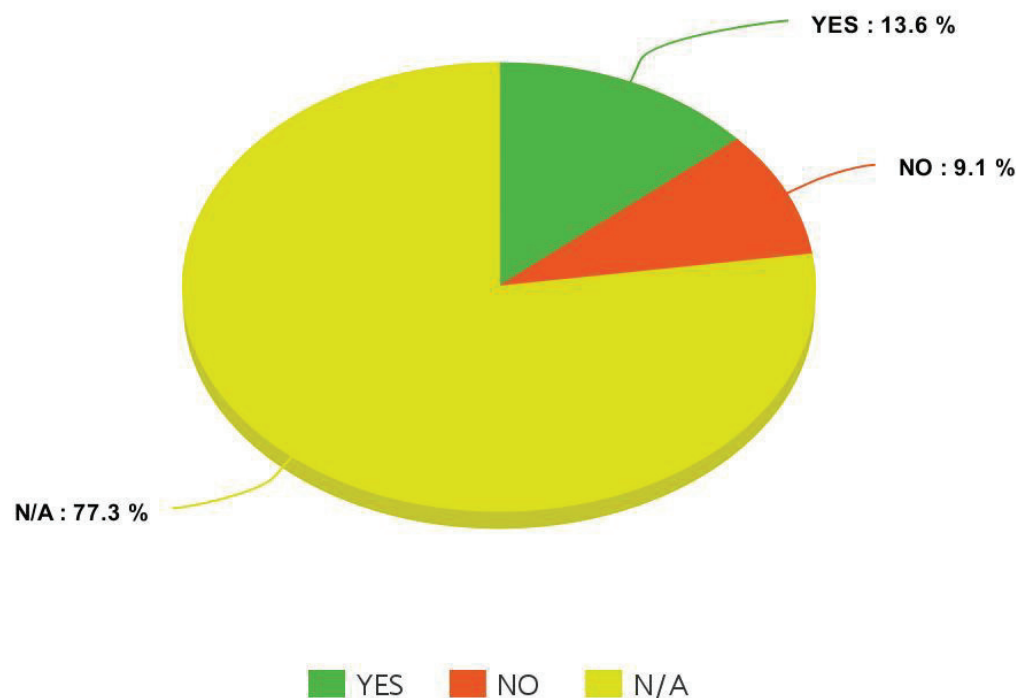
If your employer offered a public bus pass at no cost to you, would you consider riding the bus?



Question 9: If you are a Hwy 74A business owner, would you provide employee incentives, such as subsidized passes to ride the public bus?

Response	Percentage
Yes	13.6%
No	9.1%
N/A	77.3%

If you are a Hwy 74A business owner, would you provide employee incentives, such as subsidized passes to ride the public bus?



Question 10: Do you know about Blue Ridge Commuter Connections (www.blueridgecommute.org), a website that helps people find alternatives to driving alone?

Response	Percentage
Yes	10.7%
No	89.3%

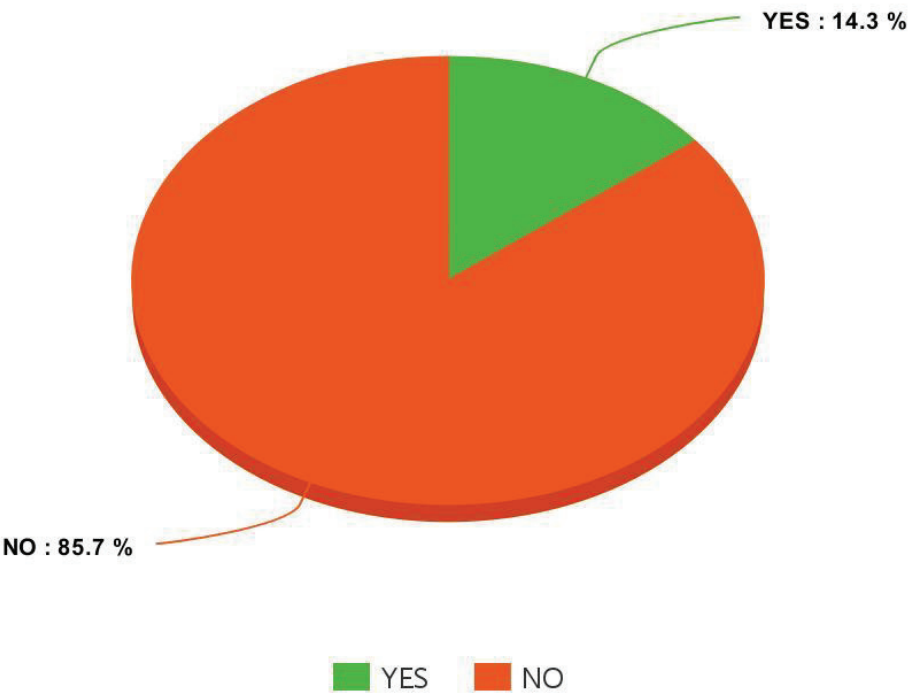
Do you know about Blue Ridge Commuter Connections (www.blueridgecommute.org), a website that helps people find alternatives to driving alone?



Question 11: Do you know about Share the Ride NC (www.sharetheridenc.com), a website that helps match commuters together for carpooling?

Response	Percentage
Yes	14.3%
No	85.7%

Do you know about Share the Ride NC (www.sharetheridenc.com), a website that helps match commuters together for carpooling?



Question 12: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about possible public bus service?

- Make it easier for child to go to and from school. I could stay involved as a volunteer.
- Missed all sons concerts last year because no transp.
- My son is going to be starting a job and this would help with transportation as he doesn't have his license yet.
- I am a single mother of teenagers. This service would make it possible for my daughter to participate in more after school activities while I'm at work.
- It would be great to see roads built with bus stops that are off the main roads, mainly for safety for buses, and others driving. Also, update, maintain bus stops. (I would not consider standing or sitting at one at this time. There needs to a covered area, adequate seating, and be cleaned.) :)
- More bus lines, more frequent service & more sidewalks would all greatly contribute to the degree of participation the greater Asheville community
- I hope this goes throug, as I know many people without cars will appreciate this service being offered, or made available. Thank you.
- It would really be a blessing to have a bus going out that way!